

REMARKS

Claims 2-6, 8, 9 and 16-23 remain pending in this application. Claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 16-23 are rejected. Claims 1, 7, 10-15 and 24-27 are previously cancelled. Claims 4 and 9 are withdrawn. Claims 2 and 6 are amended herein to clarify the invention.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 16-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for containing subject matter allegedly not described in the specification and under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. More specifically, the Office Action states that the structural limitations introduced to claims 2 and 6 in the previous amendment regarding the bolt are new matter and indefinite. Applicant has obviated the need to address these rejections by removing the structural limitations from the claims.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Meredith (U.S. Pat. No. 5,655,936) in view of Weddendorf (U.S. Pat. No. 5,340,252) and in further view of Mehlberg (U.S. Pat. No. 5,842,894). Claims 16-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Meredith in view of Weddendorf and in view of Mehlberg in further view of Nalle (U.S. Pat. No. 3,104,493). More specifically, the Office Action states that Meredith discloses all

the elements recited in the claims except for the hexagonal exterior, inner conical portion, nut segment, stop flange and a spring that provides biasing to the nut segment, which are disclosed in Weddendorf, a plurality of fitting pieces which are disclosed in Mehlberg, and fitting pieces with an arcuate shape disclosed in Nalle. In other words, the Office Action asserts that the claims recite a structure that is a combination of elements from the cited art yielding predictable results.

MPEP §2143 states that when rejecting a claim based on the rationale that the recited structure is simply “combining prior art elements according to known methods to yield predictable results” there must be a “finding that the prior art included each element.” In addition, there must be a finding that “each element merely performs the same function as it does separately.” Furthermore, to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, it is necessary to show that all the claim limitations are taught or suggested by the prior art. *See In re Royka and Martin*, 180 USPQ 580, 583, 490 F.2d 981 (CCPA 1974).

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections because the prior art fails to include each element as recited in the claims and that elements cited in the prior art do not perform the equivalent function as in the structure recited in the claims.

Alternatively, the Applicant avers that the claims as amended overcome the rejection.

Claims 2 and 6 have been amended to highlight the structural characteristics and the structural interconnection of the guides and nut segments. As may be clearly seen in Figure 6, adjacent pairs of guides or guide posts (9) have side faces that are inclined towards each other. Between each pair of guides (9) is a nut segment (12) that has side faces opposing the guide (9) side faces with the same inclination angle. This structure and interconnection of the guides (9) and nut segments (12) provides for sliding movement of the nut segments (12) in an axial direction and radial displacement urged by sliding engagement. In addition, the structure and interconnection of the guides (9) and nut segments (12) prevents the nut segments (12) from falling radially inwards towards the axis. This structural characteristic is inherent because the nut segments (12) are urged to be radially displaced by the sliding engagement with the guides (9).

None of the references cited in the Office Action rejection discloses guides and nut segments with structure and interconnections to prevent the nut segments from falling radially inwards towards the axis. The Office Action states that Weddendorf “discloses a .. nut .. including guideposts (57) .. [and] nut segments

(41).” However, Weddendorf states that the “upstanding ribs 57 extending longitudinally between the respective shells [(38)] .. function and act similar to the keys and grooves of the first embodiment.” See Weddendorf col. 5 lines 2-4. Weddendorf further elaborates that the “shells are urged radially outwardly by the force of the clips 48, 50.” See Weddendorf col. 5 lines 12-13. Thus, it is clear that the upstanding ribs (57) and the shells (38) with smooth or continuous outer surfaces (41) do not have the equivalent structure or function as the guides and nut segments recited in the claims. Otherwise, Weddendorf would not require the clips (48) and (50). Therefore, the cited references do not render the claims obvious because they do not include the nut segments or guides recited in the claim and the combination of the elements from the cited art would change some of the elements’ functions.

In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner acknowledge receipt of the priority document which was filed in the parent application on 09/898,820.

Applicant respectfully requests a one month extension of time for responding to the Office Action. The fee of \$60 for the extension is provided for in the charge authorization presented in the PTO Form 2038, Credit Card Payment form, provided herewith.

If there is any discrepancy between the fee(s) due and the fee payment authorized in the Credit Card Payment Form PTO-2038 or the Form PTO-2038 is missing or fee payment via the Form PTO-2038 cannot be processed, the USPTO is hereby authorized to charge any fee(s) or fee(s) deficiency or credit any excess payment to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

Respectfully submitted,
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